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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Nominations Requested for Montana's Tourism Awards

Helena, MT – January 18, 2006 – The Governor's Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) is accepting nominations for the Montana 2006 Tourism Awards. Nominations for Tourism Person of the Year, Tourism Community of the Year, Tourism Event of the Year and Tourism Partnership of the Year will be accepted. "The Montanans behind these awards are the engines that keep our tourism industry moving forward" cites Governor Brian Schweitzer, "Collectively all of us in this great state appreciate the opportunity to share in their successes."

The awards recognize individuals, events, or communities whose efforts to promote or develop Montana's tourism opportunities, this year or for a series of years, have preserved or enhanced tourism's role in Montana's economy.

The award winners will be announced at the 32nd Annual Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation scheduled for April 10-11, 2006, at the Best Western Heritage Inn in Great Falls, Montana. Governor Brian Schweitzer will present the awards.

Nomination forms are available from the Department of Commerce Montana Promotion Division by calling Barb Sanem at 406-841-2769 or e-mail barb@visitmt.com. The forms are also available electronically at www.travelmontana.mt.gov/conference/awards.shtm. The deadline for nominations is March 17, 2006.

The 2005 award winners included Tourism Person of the Year Dr. Joseph Medicine Crow of Lodge Grass and Community of the Year Livingston, Montana. The Augusta American Legion Rodeo won in the Tourism Event category and the Great Falls CVB along with Russell Country were awarded the Tourism Partnership of the Year.

Tourism and recreation is one of Montana's largest industries. In 2004, 9.8 million people visited Montana spending \$1.96 billion during their stay. Over 39,000 jobs are directly and indirectly supported by nonresident travel, resulting in over \$765 million in total personal income for Montana residents.

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